

**4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2019**

**Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, I dedicated you.
I fortified you, and I will deliver you, says the Lord."**

Lord, I take refuge in you for I am fearfully wonderfully made

If there is anything we should hear issuing forth from our mouths, it is the refrain, "*Oh God, you are my rock and salvation. On you I depend from my birth. I proclaim your wondrous deeds. I will sing of our salvation.*" It would seem this is what we would expect to hear issuing forth from our mouths. And yet, we also hear the plea, "*Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness wipe away my offense. Cleanse me from my guilt. Indeed in guilt was I born, in sin my mother conceived me.*"

There are two sides to us aren't there - the side of hope and the side of despair. It sometimes feels like there is a war going on inside us, that life seems full, and yet never full enough, and we lose hope and conclude that there must be something wrong with us. Does this sound familiar?

I came across an article this past week that I forgot I had. It is by the well-known spiritual author, Oblate Fr. Fr. Ronald Rolheizer. The article is titled, "We are saved by fire." It reads:

"We are born congenitally dis-eased, incurably erotic, restless, consumed by a thirst that cannot be quenched and a fire that will not be stilled. To be human is to be on fire for a consummation, a love, a restfulness, an embrace, and a symphony that in this life forever escapes us. In every cell of our bodies and in the very DNA of our souls, we ache for someone or something that we have not yet known, ache in a way that leaves us too dissatisfied and restless to live fully inside our own skins. Our lives always seem too small for us. This is the key, this is God's doing. God is the hand behind this intolerable flame of fire.

"This fire inside us is not necessarily a sign that we are doing anything wrong, that we have missed the boat somewhere, are sinful or are too-greedy for our own good. This is the normal order of things, God's doing. The fire inside us comes from the way God made us, to crave the infinite and to be dissatisfied with everything else until that wide embrace is consummated. The fire inside us will never be extinguished simply by attaining the right partner, the right job, the right city, the right set of friends, and the right recognition. We will always be on fire.

"The choice is not between being restless or being restful, between being tense of heart or calm of soul. The choice is between two kinds of fire, two kinds of restlessness, two kinds of inner thirsts.

"The German poet, Goethe, speaks of a "*holy longing*" which he defines as "*a desire for higher love-making,*" a longing to embrace the world and make love to it as God does. Such a desire, if correctly fostered, will wreak a painful but wonderful spiritual havoc within us; it will make us "*insane for the light,*" wild with the desire to transmute ourselves, grow wings like the

butterfly and fly off, not to escape the world, but to die to all the things that prevent us from making love to the world.

"It is not for us to deny our longings - this fire - but to enter them, deepen them, and widen them until we become "*insane enough for the light, desiring enough for higher love-making*" so that, like the butterfly, we open ourselves to being reformed by the very fire of God's own self."

Does this do anything for you? Everyday we hear about how our country, and world, is restless, on fire, looking for the belief system, the right political leader, the right partner, the right job, the right city, the right set of friends, the right recognition. We keep looking for that someone or something that we have not yet known, aching in a way that leaves us too dissatisfied and restless to live fully inside our own skins.

This article is about hope, about having hope when we can see no evidence why we should, and still we continue to hope. This is what Fr. Rolheizer is saying. "We are born congenitally dis-eased, incurably erotic, restless, consumed by a thirst that cannot be quenched and a fire that will not be stilled. To be human is to be on fire for a consummation, a love, a restfulness, an embrace, and a symphony that in this life forever escapes us. In every cell of our bodies and in the very DNA of our souls, we ache for someone or something that we have not yet known, ache in a way that leaves us too dissatisfied and restless to live fully inside our own skins. Our lives will always seem too small for us. This is the key, this is God's doing. God is the hand behind this intolerable flame of fire. The fire inside us comes from the way God made us, to crave the infinite and to be dissatisfied with everything else until that wide embrace is consummated. We will always be on fire."

We need to hear this again, "It is not for us to deny our longings - this fire - but to enter them, deepen them, and widen them until we become "*insane enough for the light, desiring enough for higher love-making*" so that, like the butterfly, we open ourselves to being reformed by the very fire of God's own self." So, whenever it feels like life isn't enough and that there must be something wrong with us, there's not. It's just the desire for God in us. Let us rejoice and be glad. This is God's doing - putting in us a longing for that wide embrace until it is consummated.

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